

This document describes a broad spectrum of current activities in King County, and it is not an exhaustive list. Some activities described here have been launched by the King County Overweight Prevention Initiative, and others have been implemented by organizations associated with the Initiative.

King County Overweight Prevention Initiative

May 2006

OVERVIEW

The King County Overweight Prevention Initiative brings together a diverse group of organizations from throughout the county in order to make changes that promote healthier eating and more active living. The main sponsors of the Initiative are Public Health - Seattle & King County, the King County Board of Health and the University of Washington's Exploratory Center for Obesity Research and Center for Public Health Nutrition. The Initiative is led by a Steering Committee and four workgroups: Nutrition, Physical Activity, Design for Active Communities and Communications.

- Four community forums have been held in September 2004, May 2005, October 2005 and now May 2006. View presentations: www.metrokc.gov/health/overweight/presentations.htm
- The King County Board of Health passed an obesity prevention resolution in October 2005: www.metrokc.gov/health/boh/res0508.pdf.
- The 10 point plan, included in the Board of Health resolution, guides the work of the Initiative: www.metrokc.gov/health/overweight

10 POINT PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

1. Communications: Carry out a community-wide campaign to promote healthy eating and active living, including messages designed to motivate families to reduce individuals' and children's TV and screen time.

In April 2006 the Initiative launched the "Live outside the box" educational campaign to inform families and the general community about the risks of too much television and screen time on the health and well-being of children. The "Live outside the box" educational campaign includes radio PSAs, a series of posters, and a toolkit in English and Spanish. The colorful toolkit includes facts about television and health, a tool to assess how much television families are really watching, a "Live outside the box" challenge to go "No TV for a week!", alternatives to watching television, including 25 indoor activities, 25 outdoor activities, and fun, easy recipes for families, and strategies to help reduce the amount of television that is watched at home.

The "Live outside the box" toolkit is being distributed throughout King County, including community and public health centers, health care providers and child care centers. To view and download "Live outside the box" materials, visit: www.metrokc.gov/health/reducetv. In the second half of 2006 there will be a campaign to promote physical activity and reduced food portion sizes. (Contact: Matías Valenzuela, Public Health - Seattle & King County)

Other activities by Initiative participants:

- American Heart Association Obesity Campaign; “Passport to Summer Fitness” campaign by KOMO 4 and Children’s Hospital includes reduced screen time message; Strong Kids program by YMCA of Greater Seattle and Children’s; Children’s Hospital Obesity Action Team website: www.childrensobesityaction.org; Children’s Hospital and American Heart Association’s “Love Them with All of Your Heart” initiative; Click It Kits developed by state Department of Health and University of Washington for use in Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs (ECEAP) to encourage TV reduction and physical activity; Action for Media Education Program’s Food for Thought media literacy
- Step Up to Health - Snoqualmie Valley is a campaign to increase physical activity in the Cities of North Bend and Snoqualmie, involving the cities and Si View Parks, Snoqualmie Valley Hospital, Mt. Si Senior Center and Public Health - Seattle & King County.

2. Nutrition and physical activity: Assist school districts’ development and implementation of nutrition and physical activity policies.

Activities by Initiative participants include:

- Identifying King County School Districts in King County (19) that have adopted nutrition and physical activity policies; analyzing King County School District nutrition and physical activity policies to ensure they comply with both state (SB 5436) and federal regulations (local wellness policy requirement through the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004); identifying King County Districts that developed procedures, an implementation plan and a method for evaluation in addition to their policy; identifying King County School Districts that included students, parents and the community in the development and implementation of their policy; measuring King County School District policies against a model standard such as the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity model school wellness policy (<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/index.html>) (Contact: Shelley Curtis, Children’s Alliance)
- The American Heart Association (AHA) is working with local school boards to encourage the adoption of physical education and nutrition policies. AHA will continue to monitor the progress of the local school districts.
- Farm to school connection: Monthly meetings between parents, nutritionists, and concerned residents and organizations in King County working to increase access to fresh local produce. This group has established Farm to School Connections Team list serve. (Contact: Sylvia Kantor, WSU Extension)
- Legislators are being educated about the importance of physical education in the schools. For example, on February 17th, the American Heart Association, in partnership with the American Cancer Society and the American Diabetes Association, hosted a legislative reception in Olympia to discuss obesity in general, childhood obesity specifically and the costs of obesity to businesses.
- Northshore and Shoreline School Districts have Teens R Talkin, a collaborative forum focusing on physical activity and issues of built environment and school nutrition in the community.
- Fit and Active Bellevue is a collaborative among the City of Bellevue, Public Health - Seattle & King, Bellevue School's PTSA, and YMCA to support public and private schools’ physical education programs.

Seattle Public School District activities include:

- Developing “Fitness Policies” for the district. A committee comprised of community experts and district staff is reviewing available research and best practices in regards to facilities, playgrounds, equipment, walk to school, physical education, PE waivers, athletics, intramurals, after school programs, sports clubs, health education, recess, staff wellness and community fitness opportunities. The committee will develop policy recommendations to the school board with the intent of passing a comprehensive set of policies that support student and staff fitness.

- Developing healthier options for school meal programs that include lower sugar and fat, and higher fiber meals.
- Creating tools that support implementation of district nutrition policies. One example, the Healthy Snacks Calculator allows schools to assess compliance of snack foods. (<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/nutrition-svc/calculator/calculator.dxml>)
- Creation of a district-wide Nutrition Advisory Committee to obtain community input and support to the Department of Nutrition Services. Focus areas include: menu options, nutrition education, facilities and equipment, implementation of nutrition policy and cost containment.
- Developing partnerships with outside organizations to support healthy school environments through nutrition and physical activity enhancements in several local elementary schools. (Contact: Kirsten Fransen, Seattle Public Schools)

Activities in child care settings:

- Steps to Health “Fuel and Play the Healthy Way” program sponsored by the Child Care Health Program, Public Health - Seattle & King County, includes trainings and consultation for child care and out of school time providers on healthy eating and increasing physical activity in child care settings. Trainings are offered annually in south Seattle and south King County.
- University of Washington and Healthy Child Care Washington created a model physical activity policy that can be adopted by child care programs throughout the state. The purpose is to increase physical activity opportunities for children in child care settings.

3. Nutrition and physical activity: Enhance employers’ efforts to promote nutrition and physical activity through work site wellness programs, starting with school and King County employees as model worksites.

Activities by Initiative participants:

- King County’s employee Health Reform Initiative started in January 2006 to provide incentive to King County employees in order to improve lifestyle choices through activities such as the Eat Smart – Move More campaign. Low risk employees can choose to record daily physical activity time or fruit and vegetable consumption. The employees identified with a health risk are working with health coaches on an individual action plan. All employees who work toward these goals and submit documentation will obtain the best level of medical insurance rates in 2007.
- Seattle School District carried out the Seattle Schools Walking Challenge in the administration building. See presentation: www.metrokc.gov/health/overweight/presentations.htm#october
- City of Kirkland, Evergreen Healthcare and Public Health - Seattle & King County developed the "Take the Stairs" educational campaign to encourage employees to use stairwells as a way of increasing physical activity. Lake Washington School District has requested signage to place in administrative office stairwells.
- City of Bellevue's "Fit and Active Bellevue" collaborative with Public Health - Seattle & King County was able to influence city policy that allowed City of Bellevue employees to have access to the fitness center with out a cost. In the past employees were charged to use the facility.

4. Encourage breastfeeding friendly policies at worksites and child care facilities.

Activities by Initiative participants:

- Washington Mutual developed a Healthy Workplace Initiative in 2005 that supports workplace breastfeeding practices. Through a collaborative effort with Corporate Property Services and HR Policy groups the following has been accomplished: inventory of existing mothers rooms facilities at large campus sites; needs assessment survey; establish corporate standards and guidelines for mothers rooms;

develop a process for securing new mothers rooms; and communication plan and strategy to all stakeholders.

- The Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington (BCW) provides information for employers to support their breastfeeding employees. The BCW's free, "Working & Breastfeeding: It's Worth It!" packet is a tool to help both employers and employees get started. The comprehensive packet outlines easy steps to supporting breastfeeding employees and reviews the healthcare savings associated with breastfeeding. Included are sample company policies and descriptions of success stories from other companies. It is available in English and Spanish. Employers can call the BCW at 206-281-8032 to ask questions and discuss their needs. The BCW also acknowledges employers via the Outstanding Employer Award. For details: www.hmhbwa.org/bcw.
- Child Care Program, Public Health - Seattle & King County, is educating child care center staff on the benefits and best practices to support breastfeeding. A model policy and procedures were developed to support a Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Program. Child care centers are encouraged to adopt these model policies and procedures that address breastmilk safety, labeling, storage and individual feeding plans.
- Child Care Program, Public Health - Seattle & King County, provided training workshop for 80 child care providers with a focus on breastfeeding in 2004. The program developed a pamphlet for child care providers, "Our Child Care Welcomes Breastfed Babies," in collaboration with Snohomish Health Districts Child Care Program - 2005. (Contact: Adrienne Dorf, Child Care Team, Public Health - Seattle & King County)

5. Support the adoption of guidelines, best practices and policies that promote nutrition standards, appropriate portion sizes and healthy food choices

Activities by Initiative participants include:

- Establishing a Seattle King County Food Policy Council and Farm to School Connections Team. (Contact: Sylvia Kantor, WSU Extension)
- Healthy Eating for Healthy Aging (HEHA) provides nutrition education to assist low income older adults and immigrant populations to improve their nutrition status. (Contact: Janet Kapp, Public Health - Seattle & King County)
- Food and Physical Activity Guidelines for Healthy Meetings are voluntary guidelines adopted by King County government to promote healthier food selection and opportunities for physical activity for meetings, conferences and events. Washington Assoc. of Local WIC Agencies (WALWICA) adopted these guidelines. Promotion of the guidelines has led to local and national news coverage. See: www.metrokc.gov/health/nutrition/meetings.htm (Contact: Donna Oberg, Public Health - Seattle & King County)
- King County has begun adding healthier snack options to existing vending machines in several King County buildings (Administration, Courthouse and Public Health location in Wells Fargo Center). This project uses the national Winner's Circle nutrition criteria for product selection to increase access to healthier foods for employees and others using King County buildings.

6. Physical activity: Support the implementation of "Safe and active routes to schools and transit" programs.

Activities by Initiative participants include:

- Active Seattle, an Active Living by Design project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is a collaboration of Feet First, Public Health – Seattle & King County, and Seattle Department of Transportation. Project goals include increasing walking and biking through health promotion and

improvements to the built environment in five Seattle neighborhoods: Central District, Beacon Hill, Delridge, North Aurora, and Lake City.

- Public Health - Seattle & King County staff worked in collaboration with community partners to develop an “active transportation” education tool for state policy makers. The education tool recommends four policy areas that can increase opportunities for physical activity: safe routes to school, sidewalk and bicycle connections, safe routes to transit, and walking and cycling routes in transit-oriented development (TOD).
- Safe Routes to School trainings: November 1, 2005, Tacoma, WA: Over 146 bicycle and pedestrian professionals gathered as part of the Footprints and Bike Tracks Conference. May 9, 2005: 120 people (plus trainers and support staff) participated in a one-day free workshop at the North SeaTac Community Center. The nationally certified course was taught by staff from the Seattle Department of Transportation, Feet First, and the Bicycle Alliance. The training was funded by a grant from the Washington State Department of Health. Participants included public works and transportation planners, engineers, teachers, school staff, and community activists.
- Public Health - Seattle & King County staff collected Parent Surveys at two Kirkland Elementary schools to assist in informing the City of Kirkland about walking to school practices and to identify barriers that may prevent parents from allowing their children to walk.

7. Physical activity: Support greater use of private and public facilities for physical activity, starting with community and senior centers and schools.

Willie Austin (Austin Foundation) and Amy Shumann (Public Health - Seattle & King County) are working with Seattle Parks and Recreation leadership to plan a King County Overweight Prevention Initiative presentation to community center coordinators in May 2006.

Seattle public schools has a policy that allows community use of facilities (schools have first priority, then parks and recreation, and then the community (see <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/policies/e/e07-00.pdf> for the policy and <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/policies/e/e07-01.pdf> for the procedure).

8. Design for active communities: Support the completion of missing pedestrian and bicycle links in King County.

There is widespread consensus among Initiative participants and public health professionals on the importance of making physical activity easy, convenient, and part of one's daily routine. Walking and cycling are two of the most feasible types of physical activity that individuals can undertake. A preliminary analysis of the active transportation network (e.g., pathways, sidewalks, cycling trails) within King County, however, reveals that significant physical gaps and critical accessibility issues exist at every scale (unincorporated areas, cities, and neighborhoods). An initial inventory of information about the missing pedestrian and bicycle links of the active transportation network shows that several factors including availability and quality of mapped information, jurisdictional priorities, funding, and geographic information system capability will influence how this work proceeds. Further discussions will be convened to identify a project management framework as well as the goals, scope, products, budget, and schedule of this critical work. The Puget Sound Regional Council, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, transportation planners, and other interested parties are expected participants in this endeavor. (Contact: Anne Bikle, Public Health - Seattle & King County)

9. Design for active communities: Promote the development and use of checklists on standards of active community design.

Two draft checklists have been created. Checklist A is for planners and other municipal staff to use as they create and update land use plans and related plans and regulations. This checklist is nearly finalized and will be presented to the Puget Sound Regional Council and then formally promoted and distributed to all cities within King County this summer.

Checklist B is still under development. This checklist is for municipal staff to use who work directly with developers and others seeking to undertake various land development projects. It is intended to be used as part of the permitting and development review process. (Contact: Anne Bikle, Public Health - Seattle & King County)

10. Research: Partner with academia and our communities to promote evidence-based practices and evaluate and disseminate results regularly and rapidly.

This component of the ten-point plan is being integrated into all of the other parts. For example, program evaluation is an important research mechanism for identifying effective practices and policies and the UW Exploratory Center for Obesity Research (ECOR) and the Center for Public Health Nutrition (CPHN) have partnered with Seattle Public Schools and Feet First to evaluate the Eat Better, Feel Better Project at T.T. Minor Elementary School. The evaluation will assess the outcomes of this multi-component program and its progress on meeting the overall goal to help children and their families make healthy food choices by supporting nutrition policies, expanding opportunities for nutrition education, and focusing on physical improvements in the cafeteria. In addition to contributing to the evidence-base for effective programs, this collaboration provides opportunities for University of Washington graduate students to develop and apply their public health practice and research skills in a community setting.

Exploratory Center for Obesity Research, with partners from Public Health - Seattle & King County, has also been involved with members of Seattle and King County's faith-based communities on the issue of healthy weights and health disparities. The research team will be using a Community Based Participatory Research approach to partnerships in a new African American - Physically Healthy and Trim (AA-PHAT) Project. The goal is to respond to community interests in identifying the positive assets that support healthy lifestyles including weight maintenance in African American women. A meeting of the community Advisory Committee was held in late April 2006 to explore interests and determine how research may support the promotion of best practices and dissemination. ECOR and Public Health are working to facilitate this project and hope to submit for a pilot grant in the fall of 2006.

The ECOR, CPHN, and Public Health web sites and listservs and communication networks are effective means for disseminating results back to researchers, health advocates, public health practitioners, and the community. (Contact: Laura Streichert, UW Exploratory Center for Obesity Research [ECOR])

For more information on the Initiative, contact:

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